

**MINUTES OF DUCKLINGTON  
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING  
HELD ON THURSDAY 19 JUNE 2014  
IN THE VILLAGE HALL, DUCKLINGTON AT 7.30 PM**

**1. Present:**

**Parish Councillors:**

Edmund Strainge (Chairman)  
Richard Border  
David Duthie  
Peter Godwin (8.35pm onwards)  
Catherine Maddison  
Glyn Rees

Richard Brown (Clerk)  
Ben Woodruff – West Oxfordshire District Councillor  
Wing Commander Nick Robson – RAF Brize Norton  
Jane Bowley – Lower Windrush Valley Project Officer  
Martin Layer – Smiths of Bletchington  
11 members of the public

**2. Apologies:**

Peter Almgill – Parish Councillor  
Adrian Armitage – Parish Councillor  
Sarah Stanley – Parish Councillor

**3. Welcome**

Edmund Strainge, Chairman of the Parish Council, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**4. Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting on 9 May 2013**

The Minutes were signed by the Chairman.

**5. Speakers**

The Chairman introduced the following speakers who talked on issues of local interest that particularly affect the residents of Ducklington. Questions were invited on the content of the talks that lasted approximately 15-20 minutes and on any other related matters. Areas covered included progress made during the year, issues encountered and future developments. A Question and Answer session followed each presentation where all matters raised received a full explanation.

**- Ben Woodruff – West Oxfordshire District Councillor ( WODC)**

Ben introduced himself as the newly elected Councillor (May elections) with a responsibility for the village of Ducklington and publicly thanked all those who voted for him. Being newly elected Ben chose to re iterate that WODC has again frozen Council Tax and that policies such as free parking are proven to assist commerce and tourism, key matters in maintaining the prosperity of the area. Other examples of progress are the road improvements currently in progress on Ducklington Lane and the continuing work on managing flood defence in the area. Ben also gave a future commitment to assist the Council obtain grants to update the play and sports facilities in the village.

**- Wing Commander Nick Robson – RAF Brize Norton**

Nick explained that his role is to efficiently run all aspects of the airfield at Brize Norton and deal with the enlargement of the base following the closure of Lynham. New buildings are required such as for accommodation and a hanger for the new A400 Airbus, a very large but more efficient and quieter aircraft that will gradually phase out the older nosier

planes. These buildings and a proposed new road around the western end of the base, all have to accommodate the existing wildlife on the site such as the Great Crested Newts. The current prime objective of the base is managing the logistics for the Afghanistan operation until the UK's withdrawal at the end of 2014, but following that will be the support of returning troops and the movement of large and small objects to any location within the UK or overseas as required. An on-going challenge, however, is the requirement to operate within reduced financial budgets. This is achieved via his dedicated and well trained staff and introduction of new more efficient aircraft in terms of load capacity and reduced running costs. Nick explained that cost reductions are now obtained through greater efficiency in the use of personnel, who are now a mixture of military folk and reservists, together with civilian and contractor personnel who all work side-by-side and do an amazing job by bringing their talents to bear from each walk of life. The RAF also support the local community wherever they can and an example being the use of base firefighters and their equipment to provide cover when the local firemen are not working due to planned national industrial action.

- **Jane Bowley – Lower Windrush Valley Project**

Jane explained that the project – now in its 10<sup>th</sup> year of operation- had recently undergone a strategic review. The Review focused on the way forward, and In common with most other entities, had to be mindful of costs as grant funding streams diminish, although Section 106 funding is still available. Jane expressed her thanks to the Parish Councils for working with her, and their input to the Review, promising that the future way forward for the project will be shared with them before it is finalised. Jane discussed the development of hay meadows that had had mixed success but said this work will continue encouraging wild flowers and hoping that the recent floods had not caused too much damage. Public access had improved during the year with new stiles and gates at Northmoor and the project would continue to develop interesting circular walks for residents and tourists taking in local amenities such as pubs in the area.

- **Presentation by Smiths of Bletchington Ltd – Gill Mill**

Martin explained that Gill Mill had already been operating for over twenty five and that a further twenty five years of extraction will now follow their Grant of Planning Approval of its recent Master Plan.

Martin said he was keen to keep all residents in the locality actively involved in their activities through meetings such as this and discussions with interested parties through development phases and the final restoration of sites when worked out.

Examples of both are Smiths invitations to residents of the area through varies interested organisations to make suggestions both on current working methods and transport matters and on Smiths Restoration Plan for areas as sites become worked out.

Martin explained that the Master Plan had been subjected to wide public consultation by the holding of many local meetings, which allowed their plans to be shown in more detail, which includes proposals for nature conservation, recreational activities, eco tourism etc. Bio diversity is a major concern for everyone and Smiths have agreed to create reed beds over the 61 hectare site that will provide habitat for the birds like the Bittern, together with wet and grass lands for other animals and walks/ bridle ways in open spaces and around lakes. A current examples is the provision at Tar Lakes. It is also envisaged that tourism may be assisted by creating holidays for bird watchers etc and any income from such activities will be ploughed back into further enterprises over the next 25 years. Martin referred to discussions with the Ducklington Parish Council where gates have now been installed at Smiths expense on both ends of the lane that leads from the back of the village to Cogges and an understanding that is currently being reached with regard to Smith's contribution to the cost of the development of the Council's car park at the sports

field. This will help to cater for the additional walkers expected in the village as a result of the extended facilities referred to above.

**6. Parish Council Report – Edmund Strange Chairman of the Council**

Edmund reported a successful year of Parish Council activities where income and expenditure closely matched the budget.

Edmund continued by saying that he needed to raise again the issue of dog fouling which is a frequent topic raised with the Council by residents and asked everyone to be vigilant in this matter. Ben Woodruff has agreed to look into the possibility of the Witney dog warden visiting the village, but this will only have a limited affect and what is really needed is catching anti-social people in the act.

Craig Warner had been employed in the latter part of the year as the Council’s Voluntary Co-ordinator and had already gathered a small band of volunteers together. Craig has started work on ditch clearance that will assist flood protection in the village.

Replacement windows and a door have been fitted to the sports pavilion during the year and the tennis court has been re surfaced and the lines re painted. Electricians are currently working on the floodlights at the tennis court and in the car park.

Grass cutting services are now being taken from the District Council and it is hoped that everyone can see the improvements in the open spaces and at the sports field.

The Parish Council have been fortunate to acquire through Thames Valley Ambulance Service a defibulator unit that will be mounted in a convenient place in the village and a 50% grant towards its cost. This machine will be available for anyone to use and does not require training. Defibulators have been proven to save lives whilst waiting for the ambulance to arrive.

Edmund ended his presentation by thanking his fellow Councillors for their help and support during the year and to the Clerk for his efficiency in keeping the Parish Council financial records and keeping the Council compliant with the many rules and regulations.

Richard Brown, Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer, discussed the financial results of the Parish Council for the year ended 31 March 2014 and distributed pack of printed information that showed by narration and graphs that income of £30,706 was mainly made up of the precept at £26,500 and recharges of circa £2,300. Expenditure of £23,082 gave a surplus for the year of £7,624, versus a deficit last year of £5,253. Expenditure, it was further explained, fell into the broad categories of ordinary (administrative) expenses of around £9,800, on open spaces of around £5,500 and on Sports of circa £7,000 all of which was in a similar pattern to previous years when other one–off items are excluded.

**7. Closing Comments**

Edmund Strange thanked everyone for coming and hoped that the Annual meeting had been of interest. He especially thanked all those who had contributed to the evening.

Signed .....dated.....